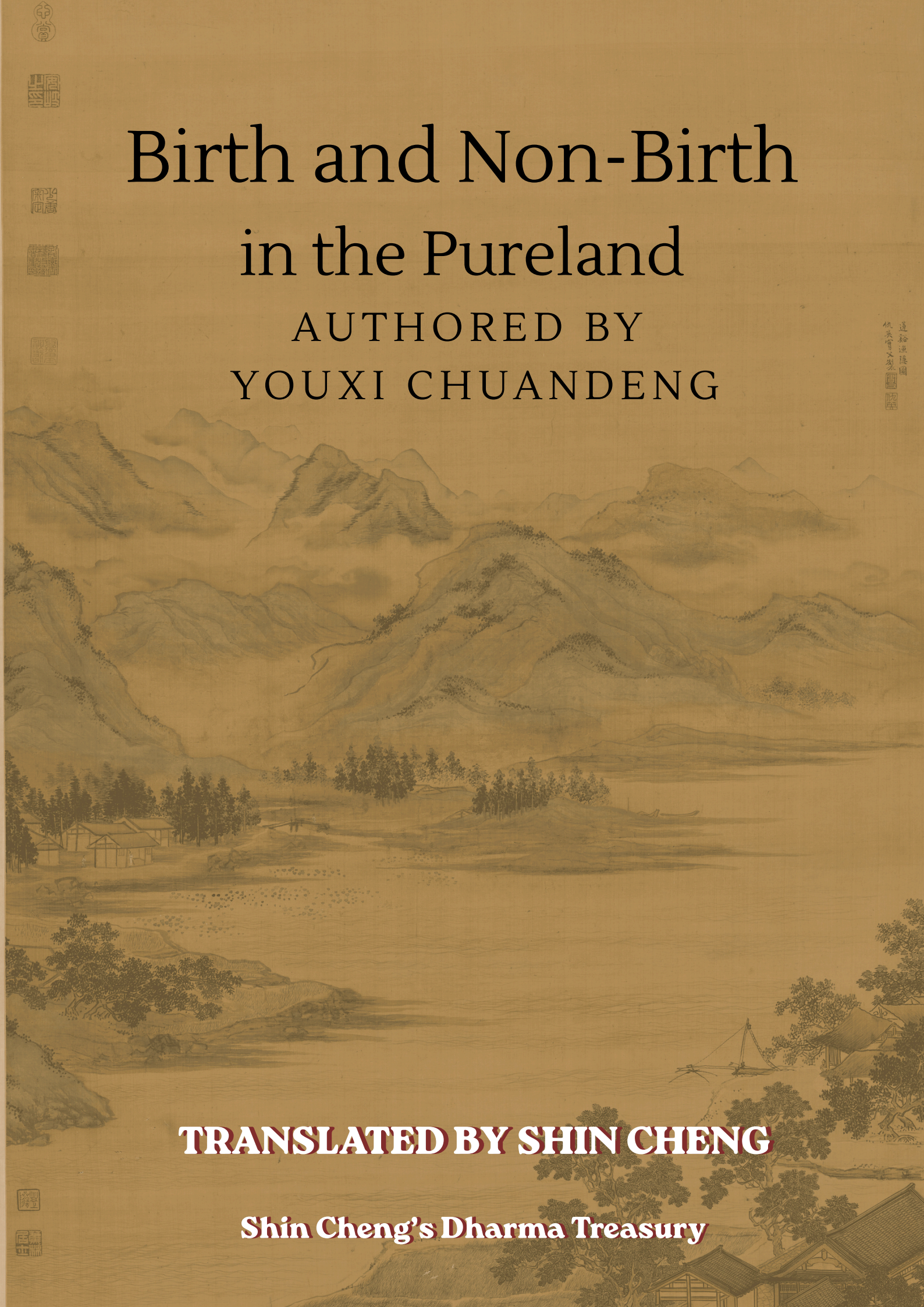
Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland

AUTHORED BY
YOUXI CHUANDENG



TRANSLATED BY SHIN CHENG

Shin Cheng's Dharma Treasury

First Published 2026

By Shin Cheng

Brisbane, Australia.

@Shin Cheng

All rights reserved.

Cover Image: Original design by Shin Cheng based on 仇英莲溪渔隐图轴 of the Palace Museum Collection. 16th Century.

Digital copies of this text are available online. Other work can be found on the translator's website:

https://sites.google.com/view/dharma-treasury/home?authuser=0

Contents

Introduction ---------- 3

Yōuxī Chuándēng: Reviving Tiāntāi ---------- 3

Contents of the Text ---------- 6

References ---------- 8

Treatise On Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland ---------- 9

One: The Gate of the One True Dharma Realm ----------12

2. The Gate of the Causal Arising of Body and Land----------17

3. The Gate of the Mutual Identity of Mind and Land ----------19

4. The Gate of the Non-duality of Sentient Beings and Buddhas ----------21

5. The Gate of the Dharma Realm as Mindfulness ----------23

6. The Gate of the Mutual Absorption of Object and Contemplations ----------25

7. The Gate of the Three Natural Contemplations ----------27

8. The Gate of Spontaneously Functioning of Resonance and Response ----------29

9. The Gate of the Eternal Oneness Between "This" and "That" ----------31

10. The Gate of the Mutual Presence of Present and Future----------33

Introduction

Pureland Buddhism is often reductively understood as a mode of faith-based Buddhism, where the devout pray for salvation in a distant life. But that could not be further from the truth. As Yōuxī demonstrates in this short text, Pureland is inseparable from the profound metaphysical view of the Mahayana tradition. Especially in China, where it is rooted philosophically in the Tiāntāi tradition.

In the following ten gates, the reader will find that Pureland Buddhism is not embedded in a duality between oneself as an ordinary person here and a blissful world 'out there'. Instead, the foundations of Pureland are an acknowledgement of the mutual interfusion of all phenomena, the inseparability of buddhas and beings, and a profound meditation on the union of the three truths.

Readers may be familiar with Japanese Pureland as an independent school of Buddhism; this text presents mainland Chinese Pureland, where Pureland is a universal practice embedded within Tiāntāi, Huayan, and Chan.

In a similar vein, this translation will provide a glimpse into Yōuxī's world of late-Ming-dynasty Buddhism. A lesser-known but prolific period of Buddhist activity. It was an age when long-neglected disciplines were revived, masters were born, and a holistic approach to the Dharma was developed.

Yōuxī Chuándēng: Reviving Tiāntāi

The author of the text, Yōuxī, was a pivotal figure in Ming Buddhism, largely responsible for the revival of the Tiāntāi school in China.[1] Whilst Tiāntāi was formative to Chinese Buddhism, it had suffered several blows throughout the centuries. The first was the loss of the Tiāntāi corpus during the chaos of the Late Tang dynasty, when several devastating rebellions and persecutions of Buddhism rocked China.[2]

It was only during the 10th century that the King of Wúyuè, Qián Chù, seeking an explanation of the Tiāntāi-Chán syncretic text – Yǒngjiā's Chán Collection, sent emissaries to Korea and China seeking the return of lost Tiāntāi teachings.[3] This led to the reestablishment of Tiāntāi in China, and from this revival came a pivotal Tiāntāi figure - Sìmíng Zhīlǐ (960–1028).

Zhīlǐ left behind an extensive collection of writings, and he came to be seen as the counterpart of Zhànrán (711-782), who commented extensively on Zhìyǐ's three major works. Zhīlǐ, following Zhànrán's lead, wrote a set of commentaries on Zhìyǐ's five minor

[1] (Ma, 2011, pp. 37-47)
[2] (BROSE, 2006, pp. 25-26)
[3] (BROSE, 2006, p. 25)

works. In these works, he engaged in a famous debate that came to be known as the Controversy of the Mountain and Off-Mountain Schools.[4]

The background of this debate was the dominance of Huáyán and Chán during the late Tang. Upon the return of Tiāntāi to China, these tendencies formed a strain of Tiāntāi that understood meditation and doctrine in line with Huáyán and Chán. This tradition privileged mind over matter in philosophy and the true awakened mind over the delusive phenomenal mind of ordinary beings in meditation.[5]

Zhīlǐ sought to re-establish the orthodox Tiāntāi view that treats mind and matter with equanimity and meditates upon the present ordinary mind rather than a noumenal true mind. Both sides referred to themselves as the Mountain school (referring to the Tiāntāi mountains), a tradition dating back Zhànrán, but Zhīlǐ went further, referring to his opponents as the Off-Mountain school – those who strayed from Tiāntāi mountains.[6]

Relevant to this translation is Zhīlǐ's Sublime Doctrine Sub-commentary on Zhìyǐ's commentary to the Contemplation of Infinite Life Sutra. In this text, he sought to establish the Mountain School approach to Pureland over competing Off Mountain and non-Tiāntāi views like those of Shàndǎo. Yōuxī draws extensively from Zhīlǐ, especially his Sublime Doctrine, referring explicitly to issues Zhīlǐ raised, such as the Buddhahood of dung beetles. At the same time it should be noted Yōuxī drew from Zhīlǐ's later critiques, identifying nature-inclusion, which Zhīlǐ saw as the distinct teaching of Tiāntāi, as merely an aspect of the conventional truth.[7]

However, we also see that Yōuxī veers away from Zhīlǐ's orthodox approach and draws on the Huáyán teaching of the Four Dharma Realms and relies on the Śūraṅgama Sutra. The latter sutra was traditionally associated with Huáyán-Chán and the Off-Mountain schools, and for doctrinal reasons, Mountain masters like Zhīlǐ were cautious in citing.[8]

This is likely a result of the second break in the Tiāntāi lineage that occurred after the Yuán dynasty. Between the last Chinese masters of the Song revival and the decline of Buddhism in the early-mid Ming, the lineage was again lost. Fortunately, the Tiāntāi texts were still preserved, allowing later students to study their teachings.

Yōuxī began his career as a Chán monk and only developed an interest in Tiāntāi when he, coincidentally like Qián Chù, encountered Yǒngjiā's Collection. Eventually, he sought discipleship under Bǎisōng Zhēnjué 百松真觉 (1538-1589), the first in the revived Tiāntāi lineage.[9]

---

[4] (Ziporyn, 2000, p. 199)
[5] (Ziporyn, 2000, pp. 195-198)
[6] (林鳴宇, 2003, pp. 197-188)
[7] (陈英善, 1997, p. 234)
[8] (Ziporyn, 2000, pp. 176-176)
[9] (Ma, 2011, pp. 22-27)

Baisong, like his student Yōuxī, began his career under a Chan monk, Qiánsōng Yuètíng 千松月亭 (1531-1588). Yuètíng had no affinity to any school (学无专宗) and studied the doctrinal gate broadly, familiar with both Huáyán and Tiāntāi.[10] Zhēnjué received his teacher's interest in doctrine but became enamoured with Tiāntāi. Eventually, he broke with his teacher over the latter's views on Tiāntāi's Six Identities, as Yuètíng preferred the Huáyán interpretation of the subject. Yuètíng took the Six Identities to be six distinct levels, rather than the Tiāntāi view that they mutually subsume one another.[11]

Baisong eventually became devoted fully to the Tiāntāi teachings after studying Zhīlǐ's Sublime Doctrine, dedicating his life to the propagation of the Tiāntāi school, successfully replanting Tiāntāi in the Ming.

Despite being such a resolute Tiāntāi master, Bǎisōng did not limit himself to traditional Tiāntāi material and, like his contemporaries, favoured the Śūraṅgama Sutra. Yōuxī inherited this trait from his master, under whom he spent ten years studying both Tiāntāi doctrine and the Śūraṅgama. In fact, his own awakening occurred when Bǎisōng was lecturing on the Sutra:

> "One day I entered [the master's] room where there was no one else. I knelt and put my palms together to ask about the Great Concentration [in the Śūraṃgama Sūtra]. The master simply opened wide his eyes and looked around, keeping silent without a word. At that moment, I had a great awakening."[12]

It is also, in Yōuxī's commentaries on the Śūraṃgama Sutra, that his Off-Mountain influence becomes most obvious. In his own work, he extensively cites the commentaries of two Off-Mountain masters – Zhìyuán and Rényuè. He follows Zhìyuán in identifying the essence of the sutra to be the Eternally Abiding True Mind, a teaching he emphasises time and again as crucial to practice.[13] This is a stark contrast to Zhīlǐ, who argued that the basis of Tiāntāi contemplation is always the ordinary, momentary, and delusional mind of the present.[14] Nonetheless, he maintains a Tiāntāi understanding of the true mind, which emphasises the equality of mind and matter over more idealistic Huáyán and Chán views:

---

[10] 《天台山方外志》卷 8:「蘇之崑山人，俗姓王氏。居徑山傳衣菴。初出月亭法師之門，亭無專宗，與師志別。由是深究性具之旨，而遙宗四明，猶北齊之悟明中論，以龍樹為」(CBETA 2026.R1, GA089, no. 89, pp. 315a08-316a1)
[11] (Ma, 2011, p. 25)
[12] (Ma, 2011, p. 24)
[13] (釋善想, 2023, pp. 93-100)
[14] (陈英善, 1997, pp. 64-66)

This Eternally Abiding True Mind is the universal essence of all dharmas. Apart from the eternal mind, no dharma can be discussed. Apart from the various dharmas, there is no eternal mind to be spoken of.[15]

Contents of the Text

Much of the explanations in this section and later in the translation will rely on the Aural Commentary (亲闻记) by Shòujiào. He was a student of Yōuxī's who not only attended Yōuxī's lecture on the text but also requested Yōuxī to explain its meaning again and again, recording what he had heard.

The name of the text, *Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland*, hints at the primary argument, which Yōuxī seeks to make – that Pureland practice is the mutual interfusion of principle and phenomena or ultimate and conventional. Birth refers to the phenomenal (事) dimension of practice, where the aspirant seeks to be reborn in Amitabha's Pureland. Non-Birth points at the principle (理) level of reality, where no phenomena can ever arise (or are born). So naturally, there can be no birth in the Pureland. Using this juxtaposition, Yōuxī reveals the Pureland to function in both the conventional and ultimate truths.

> "Thus, all day long is there birth that has never been apart from non-birth. All day long, there has been non-birth, which does not obstruct birth.
>
> Those who venerate the principle prize nothingness in their speech, saying, "There is no Pureland to be reborn in." Those who venerate the phenomenal prize existence in their speech, saying, "There is certainly a Pureland to be born in." How could such people be spoken of in the same breath [as the practitioner of the perfect teaching]?"

In the body of the text, Yōuxī structures the content into ten gates beginning with the Gate of the One True Dharma Realm. This is the metaphysical basis of the teaching that the later sections rely upon. Here, Yōuxī explains the One True Dharma Realm to be the nature of the mind and qualified by the three truths. Showing his faith in the Śūraṃgama Sutra, he cites several passages from the text to expound on this crucial Tiāntāi paradigm.

---

[15]《楞嚴經玄義》卷 3:「蓋常住真心，是一切法之總體，離常心，無諸法可論，離諸法，亦無常心可論。」(CBETA 2026.R1, X13, no. 282, p. 25c6-8 // R20, p. 47a8-10 // Z 1:20, p. 24a8-10)

The next gate turns away from the principle and to the phenomenal – the Buddha and his Pureland. The bodies and lands of the Buddha are identified as only possible due to the capacity of the One True Dharma Realm to accord and manifest according to pure and impure conditions.

In the third and fourth gates, the relationship between the aspirant sentient being and the Buddha, along with his Pureland, is explored. In doing so, Yōuxī finds that there is an intrinsic relation between the mind and the Pureland, the being and the Buddha. The Pureland is infinitely distant spatially, yet beings are born there instantly, as it is also found within their mind. The relation of the Buddha and beings is one of mutual inclusion. Buddhas awaken to the Buddhahood within beings, and beings are confused regarding those found with the Buddha's mind. It is this mutual inclusion that allows for the resonance between the aspirant and Amitabha.

In the remaining gates, Yōuxī moves from the theoretical underpinnings to the practical dimension of the Pureland theory. The most crucial of these gates is the fifth - Dharma Realm as Mindfulness. As the title suggests, what the Pureland aspirant meditates on is not merely a name or an image of the Pureland, but rather the entirety of the Dharm Realm. Through this framing of meditation, Yōuxī has integrated the two crucial concepts of the True Nature and Practice being Non-Dual (性修) and that individual phenomena are the entirety of the Dharma Realm into Pureland practice.

Now, Pureland contemplation is conducted with the understanding that any phenomena, in this case, the Buddha's name or the Pureland, is created from the entirety of the Dharma Realm. And as such, the mind that is mindful of the Buddha contains the Buddha, and that Buddha one is mindful of is identical to the mind

The following gate applies the fifth gate to the meditation mind and the object of meditation, finding that the two mutually subsume each other.

The seventh gate explores the three contemplations not as purposeful meditations, but rather natural functions of the mind. The three contemplations are of the ultimate, conventional, and middle truths. Here, it is understood that the ultimate contemplation of emptiness is the innate luminous space of mind, the conventional contemplation is the mind's capacity to respond to conditions, and the middle contemplation is that the previous two qualities of mind are identical. Thus, practice is no longer based on contrived effort, having been transformed into the innate functioning of the mind.

Yōuxī gives his explanation of the resonance theory (感应) in the eighth gate. Resonance refers to the capacity for sentient beings to connect to Buddhas and for the Buddhas to respond. This theory is frequently used to explain how it is that beings can connect to Amitabha and be received into the Pureland. He reminds readers again that Buddhas and beings share the same nature, such that they are inextricably tied. Just by thinking

of one another, they are attracted like a pair of magnets. Thus, Amitābha cannot help but be moved to save those who keep him in mind.

The final two gates collapse the spatial distinctions between our world and the Pureland, and then the temporal barrier between our practice in the causal stage and rebirth in the result life.

References

BROSE, B. (2006). CROSSING THOUSANDS OF LI OF WAVES: THE RETURN OF CHINA'S LOST TIANTAI TEXTS. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*.

Ma, Y. (2011). *The Revival of Tiantai Buddhism in the Late Ming:*. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

Ziporyn, B. (2000). *Evil and/or/as The Good OMNICENTRISM, INTERSUBJECTIYITY, AND VALUE PARADOX IN TIANTAI BUDDHIST THOUGHT.* Harvard University Asia Center.

林鳴宇. (2003). 宋代天臺研究序說. *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies n.7*.

釋善想. (2023). *傳燈與智旭思想之比較研究*. 華梵大學.

陈英善. (1997). *天台性具思想*. 三联.

Treatise On Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland[16]

Authored by Sramana Chuándēng of Yōuxī

Translated by Shin Cheng

Homage:

I prostrate to the complete wisdom of Shakyamuni,

The great guide of immeasurable life and awakening,

And the Mahayana Sutras of Pureland he spoke,

Most definitive of all, the perfected and sudden.[17]

[16] The *Aural Commentary* divides the title into three pairs:

a) 'Birth' and 'Pureland'
    a. Birth: the sentient being who takes birth. Of two kinds:
        i. Ordinary sentient beings who take birth in all four kinds of purelands.
        ii. Noble beings who only seek in the three higher purelands.
    b. Pureland: the land in which birth is taken.
        i. Four Lands:
            1. Land of Quiescent Light: the Dharmakaya Buddha-Land
            2. True Reward Land of Adornment: the true reward that accords with reality, the Purelands that Noble Bodhisattvas who have partially attained the Dharmakaya roam in.
            3. Land of Skilful Means with Remainder: Purelands beyond the three realms for Noble practitioners of the three vehicles (arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas) to practice in. Here, the delusions of views and cultivations have yet to be severed, so it is with remainder.
            4. Land Shared by Worldlings and Nobles: Where both worldlings and Nobles dwell. This includes both the Saha world we live in, as well as Purelands like Amitabha's Pureland for those who take rebirth whilst deluded.

b) 'Birth in the Pureland and 'Non-Birth'
    a. 'Birth' is that which is integrated.
        i. Birth is integrated into non-birth, as the phenomenal is fused into the principle.
        ii. Though the practitioner seeks birth with each moment, there is no birth to take.
    b. 'Non-Birth' is that which integrates.
        i. The principle is manifest in the phenomenal, such that the single way does not obstruct the myriad distinctions.
        ii. Though there is no birth to take, the practitioner fervently vows to take birth.

c) 'Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland' and 'Treatise'
    a. 'Birth…' is that which is discussed.
    b. 'Treatise' is that which discusses.

[17] Perfect and Sudden refers to the highest level of Buddhist practice, that is both imminent (sudden) and not lacking in any respect (perfect).

To Manjusri, Samantabhadra, and Avalokiteshvara,

To Mahasthamaprapta, and the pristine assembly of the great ocean,

To Ashvagosa, Nagarjuna,and Vasubandhu,

To the lotus ancestors of Mt Lu in this land,

To Tiantai Zhiyi[18], as well as Fazhi[19],

To all masters past and present that spread the Dharma,

I now take refuge and pay homage to the three jewels.

I request their hidden protection to inspire my spirit,

So I may respectfully select the hidden intent of the sutras and commentaries,

To elucidate Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland,

Such that all in the future can realise this gate,

And sever all doubt, give rise to faith, and never retrogress.

To compose this treatise, ten gates have been established:[20]

---

[18] Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538-597), the founder of the Tiantai school, to which the author belongs to.

[19] Siming Zhili 四明知礼 (960–1028), recognised as the greatest Tiantai master after Zhiyi and Zhanran, and a crucial figure in the debates between the orthodox Mountain School (山家) and unorthodox Off-Mountain School (山外).

[20] The *Aural Commentary* divides the ten gates into:

a) Delusion and Awakening:
    a. Gate 1: neither delusion nor awakening.
    b. Gate 2: both delusion and awakening.
    c. Gates 3-10: awakening.
b) Phenomenal and Principle:
    a. Gate 1: Generally, principle, but the principle of the One True Dharma Realm possesses the phenomena of the ten dharma realms, so it is both. Yet it is apart from possession and non-possession. So ultimately, it is both and neither.
    b. Gate 2: Primarily phenomenal, but as the phenomenal is composed entirely of the principle, it includes both.
    c. Gates 3-10: Simultaneously phenomenal and principle.
c) Cause and Result:
    a. Gate 1: The One True Dharma Realm is neither in terms of inclusion. From the perspective of what it possesses, it is both: the nine lower realms are causal and the buddha realm is resultant.
    b. Gate 2-4 are both.
    c. Gates 5-7 are causal.
    d. Gates 8-10 are resultant.

1. The Gate of the One True Dharma Realm
2. The Gate of the Causal Arising of Body and Land
3. The Gate of the Mutual Identity of Mind and Land
4. The Gate of the Non-duality of Sentient Beings and Buddhas
5. The Gate of the Dharma Realm as Mindfulness
6. The Gate of the Mutual Absorption of Object and Contemplation
7. The Gate of the Three Natural Contemplations
8. The Gate of Spontaneously Functioning of Resonance and Response
9. The Gate of the Eternal Oneness Between "This" and "That"
10. The Gate of the Mutual Presence of Present and Future

One: The Gate of the One True Dharma Realm[21]

Within the One True Dharma Nature,

the ten dharma realms are replete,

the primary and circumstantial[22] are fundamentally interfused,

sentient beings as buddhas are without distinction.

The Treatise states:

The One True Dharma Realm[23] is the originally present mind-nature of sentient beings; this mind-nature possesses limitless virtues, and receives limitless names.

What does it mean to possess limitless virtues? To explain it concisely, the [virtues] are *Nature-Essence*, *Nature-Measure*, and *Nature-Inclusion*.

What is the *Nature-Essence*? This refers to the mind-nature being free of the four propositions and transcending the hundred negations.[24] It's essential nature is firm and dense, free from contamination, neither arising nor ceasing, and eternally abiding without destruction.

---

[21] The *AC* definition of this term, "*One refers to non-duality, True means it is not delusive. Neither delusive nor dualistic, it is the True Dharma Realm. This takes an absence of dharmas as the dharma and no realm as its realm. That is to mean, it takes the singular nature of suchness to be its Dharma Realm.*"

[22] The two retributions (依正二報)

a) Direct Retribution: the results of past karma that is the person of the sentient being.
b) Circumstantial Retribution: the results of past karma that is the environment they are surrounded by, such as the realm they live in, their country, their family, etc.

[23] The AC identifies two kinds of Dharma Realms:

a) The Mere Middle Way that is absolute and free from all phenomena, like the moon beyond the clouds. Thus, it does include within it the ten realms or anything else.
    a. Although one can discuss the nature of mind with followers of this Middle Way, one cannot talk to them about the mind-only pureland, or inherent Amitabha.
b) The Perfect Middle Way that is like a mani jewel, which is round, bright, and precious. Although it is a single jewel, it possesses three qualities. Just as this Dharma Realm, though singular, possesses the ten dharma realms.
    a. Here, birth and non-birth do not obstruct each other, and mind-only is not contradictory to Pureland.

[24] Four propositions and hundred negations 四句百非 refer to mistaken positions on metaphysics that fall into the extremes.

a) Four propositions: the tetralemma of existence, non-existence, both, and neither.
b) Hundred negations: each of the four propositions of the tetralemma possesses its own propositions (16 in total), then the three times, past, present, and future also possess these 16 propositions (48 here), then the propositions of 'having arisen' and 'not having arisen' are added each with their own 16 propositions, making 96. Together with the four fundamental propositions, there are 100 in total.

What is the Nature-Measure? This mind-nature exhausts the three times vertically and pervades the ten directions horizontally.[25] The world has a boundary, but space is boundless. Space has a boundary; however, the mind-nature is boundless. The present has a boundary, yet the past and future are boundless. The past and future have a boundary, though the mind-nature is boundless. It is inexhaustible and immeasurable.

What is Nature-Inclusion?[26] This refers to this mind-nature inherently including the ten dharma realms, that is to say the dharma realm of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas, devas, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings, which are all provisional names.[27] There are further direct retributions that consist of the Buddha's five aggregates, the Bodhisattva's five aggregates, and so forth down to the hell beings' five aggregates. These are the real dharmas.[28] Further, there are the circumstantial retributions, namely the Buddha-lands, Bodhisattva-lands, and so forth, down to the hell-realms.

For the sake of comprehension, three kinds of distinctions are made to apprehend their meaning: Nature-Inclusion is Nature-Essence, and Nature-Measure. Nature-Essence, being free of the four propositions and transcending the hundred negations, is Nature-Inclusions, being free of propositions and transcending negations. Its essential nature is firm and dense, free of contamination, neither arising nor ceasing, and eternally abiding without destruction. This also applies to Nature-Inclusion.

Nature-Measure vertically exhausts and horizontally pervades; Nature-Inclusion of the ten realms is also like this. The five aggregates of the direction retribution are the same as Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure, being pure and all-pervading. The circumstantial retributive lands are as such, too.

These three dharmas are also known as the three truths[29]. Nature-Essence is the middle truth, Nature-Measure is the ultimate Truth, and Nature-Inclusion is the conventional truth.

Hence, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra states, "The wondrous, luminous, original mind of the tathāgatagarbha is not mind, nor is it emptiness. It is not earth, water, fire, or wind. It is not the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind. It is not form, sound, smell, taste, touch,

---

[25] Vertical and Horizontal in Buddhist terminology refers generally to the dimensions or analysis from the perspectives of Time and Space.

[26] Nature-Inclusion 性具 is an essential and unique teaching of Tiantai. The *Tiantai Mind-Seal Transmission* states, *"This single word, Inclusion, reveals our school."*

[27] Provisional names refer to the designation of similar groups of aggregates. Since it is a mere name and conceptual designation upon something else, it is not a true reality of itself.

[28] The aggregates are the dharmas upon which names are designated, hence, they are referred to as real dharmas. Note, they are only 'real' in a conventional sense.

[29] The Three Truths are the fundamental teaching of Tiantai: The *Aural Commentary* states, "The Middle Truth commands all dharmas… it is apart from identity and different, yet identical to identity and difference. The ultimate truth extinguishes all dharmas… all is negated. The conventional truth establishes all dharmas… so everything is included within"

or mental objects. It is not the visual realm and so forth, up to not being the consciousness realm. It is not ignorance and so forth, up to not being old age and death. It is not the cessation of ignorance and so forth, up to not being the cessation of old age and death. It is not suffering, origination, cessation, or the path. It is neither wisdom nor attainment. It is not dāna, and so forth, up to not being prajñā. It is not a Tathāgata. It is not an arhat. It is not perfect, complete enlightenment (samyak-saṃbodhi). It is not permanence, bliss, self, or purity." This is the signlessness of Nature-Measure, which is the ultimate truth.

Yet, the originally luminous, wondrous tathāgatagarbha mind is precisely mind and precisely emptiness; it is precisely earth, water, fire, and wind. It is precisely the six worldly realms, precisely the two vehicles, and so forth, up to precisely the Tathāgata's permanence, bliss, self, and purity. These are the ten realms of Nature-Inclusion, which is the conventional truth.

Moreover, the wondrously luminous origin of mind, the tathāgatagarbha, is separate from identity and different, yet is both identity and different. This is the Nature-Essence, which is the middle truth.

Further, it (Śūraṅgama) states, "regarding the tathāgatagarbha, the nature of form is true emptiness, the true nature of emptiness is true form. It is primordially pristine and pervades the dharma-realm. Earth, water, fire, wind, space, perception, and consciousness are just so.[30] Earth, water, fire, wind, space, perception, and consciousness are Nature-Inclusion. "Primordially pristine" refers to the Nature-Essence, and "pervading the Dharma-realm" refers to its Nature-Measure.

[The Sūtra] also states: "Earth, water, fire, wind, and space are primordially pristine and pervade the Dharma-realm." This describes the Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure of the land that is the circumstantial retribution. "Perception and consciousness are primordially pure and pervade the Dharma-realm." This describes the Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure of the five aggregates that are the direct retribution.

Why does it receive immeasurable names? To put it succinctly, this mind-nature may be called the "Empty Tathāgatagarbha," or "True Thusness, Buddha-nature," or "Āmalavijñāna," or "Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom" (ādarśa-jñāna), or "Enlightenment and Cessation".[31]

The Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are called the "Empty Tathāgatagarbha." This means that the ten realms, five aggregates, and lands, which are Nature-Inclusion, are called the "empty Tathāgatagarbha."

---

[30] The Śūraṅgama Sutra describes these seven elements as that which

[31] These seven names are from the Śūraṅgama Sutra.

The Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are called "True thusness, Buddha-nature." This means that the Nature-Inclusion and so forth are called "True thusness, Buddha-nature."

The Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are called "Āmalavijñāna." This means that the Nature-Inclusion and so forth are called "Āmalavijñāna."

The Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are called "Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom". This means that the Nature-Inclusion and so forth are called "Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom".

The Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are called "enlightenment and cessation". This means that the Nature-Inclusion and so forth are called "enlightenment and cessation".

Therefore, it is said: "Within the One True Dharma Nature, the ten dharma realms are replete, the primary and circumstantial retributions are fundamentally interfused, and sentient beings as buddhas are without distinction."[32]

Question: "Regarding this One True Dharma-realm, is it the initial mind or the final mind?[33] If it is the initial mind, there should not be seven names. If it is the final mind, there should not be the nine realms. If both initial and final minds fall short, the established meaning is not valid."

Answer: "This clearly demonstrates that it is the initial mind. Precisely because it is the initial mind, it is also the final mind. And precisely because of the final mind, the initial mind is revealed to be it.

---

[32] The AC here discusses two kinds of scepticism:

a) Correct Scepticism: doubt about that which is beyond the phenomenal world, which cannot be seen or heard.
b) Inverted Scepticism: doubt of that which is close by and directly perceivable.

Here, the AC criticises the popular view that the nature of mind only intrinsically possesses the unseeable and transcendent fruit of Buddhahood, yet doubts that it includes the lower realms, the inherent evil, which is close at hand.

[33] This refers to the Six Identities to the Buddha 六即佛 in Tiantai. The “initial mind” is the first Identity and the “final mind” is the sixth identity.

a) First is the Identity in Principle, which is the inherent Buddha-Nature, that is the entirety of the Dharm-Realm.
b) Identity in Name: coming to know the principle through hearing the Dharma.
c) Identity in Contemplation: through practice, one subdues afflictions.
d) Identity in Semblance: The ten stages of faith, where the delusion of false views and cultivations is severed, and non-regression attained. Attaining the 7th stage of faith, the bodhisattva is equivalent in attainment to an arhat.
e) Partial Identity: entering the noble stages of the ten abidings, ten practices, and ten dedications. From here, the practitioner begins to sever aspects of the fundamental ignorance, veiling the Dharmakaya.
f) The Final mind is Ultimate Identity, when the practitioner has fully unveiled their Buddha-Nature to be completely identical to the Buddha.

How is it that because [the One True Dharma Realm] is the initial mind, the final mind is [the One True Dharma Realm]? If the circumstantial and direct retributions interfuse, form and mind are non-dual, manifesting in the nine realms, and skilfully saving sentient beings, all these arise from realising what is replete in this causal mind. Hence, it is said, 'The resultant grounds of the Buddhas are mutually interfused, and they merely verify the fundamental principle[34] of sentient beings." Thus, it is possible to establish provisional constructs to respond without premeditation.

If it is not so, how would it differ from the intentional supernormal powers of the smaller vehicle and non-Buddhists? For this reason, to demonstrate that the ten realms are all of the principle nature, that each are the entire Dharma-Realm, and not a single one can be altered, master Fazhi said, "The meaning of the six identities is not restricted to the Buddha, the mind and matter of all provisional and definitive practitioners of the three vehicles, humans, and devas, down to dung beetles and hell beings all possess these six identities. To distinguish their beginning and end, the start is the principle dung beetle, and the end is the ultimate dung beetle."[35] Therefore, from the identity in name onwards, they do not just reveal the buddha realm, each of the nine realms is equally highlighted. Upon the accomplishment of the result, all ten realms reach ultimate identity.

How is it that because [the One True Dharma Realm] is the final mind, the initial mind is [the One True Dharma Realm]? It is precisely because the resultant ground of the final mind fully verifies the principle basis of sentient beings. The seven names of the resultant ground are just flattering names for the inherent qualities of sentient beings; however, sentient beings dwell in confusion, so the names of their inherent nature are not manifest and are so without these names. However, when discussing their intrinsic qualities, how could they not exist? Thus, both the initial and final minds are good, and this understanding is established!

---

[34] Fundamental Principle 理本 is the principle in the first Identity, that is, inherent Buddha-Nature, the Middle Truth, etc.

[35] The AC explains, *"For example, in the animal realm, whether it be the dung beetle rolling up a dung ball forwards, or pushing it backwards, anything can be analysed by the six identities. Why? Regarding the ten realms, they are all of the principle nature; none is not the [One True] Dharma Realm, not a single one can be altered. When discussing these ten realms possessed by nature, none are not identical to Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure, they are originally pristine and pervade the Dharma Realm. Hence, from Identity in Name onwards, they are not only found in the buddha realm, but all realms."*

2. The Gate of the Causal Arising of Body and Land[36]

The One True Dharma Nature,

Is unchanging yet can accord with conditions,

The three bodies[37] and four lands,[38]

Are created and transformed from the mind.[39]

The Treatise states:

The One True Nature of the Dharma Realm is what was previously explained to the Nature-Essence, Nature-Measure, and Nature-Inclusion. In the doctrine, it is said, "Suchness is unchanging in accordance with conditions, and accords with conditions without change." This is possible as Nature-Essence and Nature-Measure are precisely Nature-Inclusion. Just as [Kongzi said], the gentleman is not a tool,[40] he is capable of both good and evil. Thus, the Jin dynasty translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra states, "it can accord with both contaminated and pure conditions, to create all ten dharma realms."

That is to say, the nine dharma realms contained in the essence of suchness accord with contaminated conditions to create the nine phenomenal dharma-realms; the buddha-realm contained within the nature of suchness can accord with pure conditioned to create the phenomenal buddha-realm.[41] This is possible, precisely

---

[36] AC describes this gate as regarding phenomenal creation, as opposed to the previous gate that is on principle inclusion.

[37] Three bodies: the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya

[38] Four Lands:

a) Land of Quiescent Light: the Dharmakaya Buddha-Land
b) True Reward Land of Adornment: the true reward that accords with reality, the Purelands that Noble Bodhisattvas who have partially attained the Dharmakaya roam in.
c) Land of Skilful Means with Remainder: Purelands beyond the three realms for Noble practitioners of the three vehicles (arhats, pratiyakabuddhas, and bodhisattvas) to practice in. here the delusions of views and cultivations have yet to be severed, so it is with remainder.
d) Land Shared by Worldlings and Nobles: Where both worldlings and Nobles dwell. This includes both the Saha world we live in, as well as Purelands like Amitabha's Pureland for those who take rebirth whilst deluded.

[39] The *AC* quotes Siming Zhili, *"Creation is shared in the four teachings, but transformation is limited to the Perfect Teaching, and found partially in the Distinct. And is divided into the "Mere" and "Inclusive". The Mere Middle Buddha Nature is like a good person, who is incapable of evil, yet commits evil acts, when forced by someone evil against their will, so their nature is transformed to be evil. The Inclusive Middle is like the gentleman who is not a [single-purpose] tool, capable of both good and evil. Like an evil person, they may commit evil acts, but their nature has not changed."* Here, the middle employed is the Inclusive Middle.

[40] From the Analects of Confucius. He is saying that tools only have a specific purpose, but a gentleman is flexible.

[41] Here, the Buddha Realm is taken to be Inherent Good and the nine lower realms as Inherent Evil.

because of Nature-Inclusion; if Nature were not inclusive, how could it have such an ability?

The Tiantai school says, "It is due to inclusion in principle that there is phenomenal function."[42] This is what it is referring to. So, it should be known that the ten phenomenal dharma-realms, three bodies, and four lands are all created through the transformation of the nature of suchness according to conditions. Since it is said, "Suchness is unchanging in accordance with conditions, and accords with conditions without change," the phenomenal bodies and lands that are pure or contaminated are in essence precisely suchness. There is not the slightest space for addition or reduction.[43]

The Śūraṅgama Sutra states, "Sight and the objects of sight, as well as the cognitive appearance produced [by the two], like flowers in the sky, are originally non-existent." The “sight and objects of sight" are originally the marvellous, pristine, luminous essence of bodhi. If this is so, then the Saha World and the Land of Bliss, the sentient beings of this world who are to be born [in the Pureland] in the nine grades and Amitabha who was already accomplished the result of one's own mind, are all created through the transformation of the mind's nature.

The mind is replete yet creates; how could it be divided into agent and object? Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind. Mind is land, land is mind. Mind is result, result is mind. The conditions of creation and the created dharmas are in their very place are the nature of mind. Therefore, seeking birth in the Pureland with this understanding is the ultimate path where birth and non-birth are both extinguished.

---

[42] Citation from Zhanran’s *Ten Gates of Non-Duality* 十不二门

[43] The AC makes a distinction between the Mere Middle and Inclusive Middle here:

a) Mere Middle: Suchness must transform before according to conditions, as a purely good person cannot commit evil unless they were changed, such that they were not *purely* good.
b) The Inclusive Middle: in the perfect teaching, the fundamental nature, possesses all dharmas so suchness can accord to conditions without change. It is through its unchangingness, that all things from purelands to contaminated worlds are suchness in themselves without change.

3. The Gate of the Mutual Identity of Mind and Land[44]

The western land of ease and joy,

Lying ten trillion [buddha-lands] away from here,

And my present, insignificant moment of my mind,

Has never had a distinction between "self and other".

The Treatise states:

The Shorter Sukhavativyuha Sutra states, "From here ten trillion buddha-lands to the west, there is a world known as Ultimate Bliss." A hundred million suns and moons, a hundred million Mount Sumerus, a hundred million great oceans, a hundred million rings of iron mountains together are referred to as a single buddha-land. So vast is a single buddha-land, how much greater are a hundred million buddha-lands? Thus, Ultimate Bliss lies far from here. Worldlings tied down in bondage, through seeking rebirth there by mindfulness of the Buddha, arrive in the snap of a finger, precisely because they are being reborn in buddha-lands replete in one's own mind.

When we speak of this present moment of mind, it is the mind of the worldling who is mindful of the Buddha. A moment of mind is most minute and most insignificant; hence, it is referred to as a present, insignificant moment of mind. That is to say, the buddha-land ten trillion [buddha-lands] away, is located in the present, insignificant moment of a worldling's mind. This mind is the land; this land is the mind. Hence, it was said, "yet there was never, even from the beginning, a distinction of 'self and other.'

Questions: "This present, insignificant moment of mind abides in the heart, how could it encompass so many distant buddha-lands?"

Answer: "This present, insignificant moment of mind is considered small by the significant, and considered great by the adept, for reality and delusion are not two. For this delusional mind arises completely as the essential nature, nature is without boundary, so the mind is without limit. The true nature is a great ocean, and yet it is as though a bubble of seafoam. The entire ocean is the bubble; the bubble returns to the ocean.[45] For suchness accords to conditions without change and is without change when according to conditions. Since it's already been said it "does not change when

---

[44] *AC, "This gate takes the distance between mind and land as separation, and the non-distinction between the two in the [fundamental] nature as identity. Mind is nature, and land is not external to the mind. Combining world and land to be one, and fusing mind and nature as a single essence is to apprehend birth as non-birth, and non-birth as birth."*

[45] Reference the Śūraṅgama *Sutra*, "Space arises within the great [mind of] awakening, like a bubble forming within the ocean."

according to conditions", how could it be limited to great and small by reality and delusion?

4. The Gate of the Non-duality of Sentient Beings and Buddhas

Though Amitabha and worldlings,

Are distinct in confusion and realisation,

The buddha mind and sentient beings' minds,

Are ultimately without duality.

The Treatise states:

Amitabha Buddha is a resultant being who has accomplished the merits of the three bodies, four wisdoms, ten powers, four of fearlessness, eighteen unshared dharmas, etc. Worldlings are causal beings, replete with limitless afflictions, numbering more than the Ganges' sands, who commit limitless karmic actions that bind them, numbering more than the Ganges' sands, and who will experience births and deaths numbering more than the Ganges' sands. The difference in characteristics of confusion and realisation can be likened to that of clouds and mud,

To say "ultimately without duality" means that in terms of characteristics, they are non-dual yet two, regarding their essential nature, they are two yet without duality. For the buddhas awaken to the buddhas found within sentient beings' minds, sentient beings are confused about sentient beings found within the buddhas' minds. The cause of awakening is the realisation of the originally replete Nature-Essence, Nature-Measure, and Nature-Inclusion within sentient beings. The cause of confusion is the ignorance of Nature-Essence, Nature-Measure, and Nature-Inclusion, verified by the buddhas.

How marvellous is the mind's nature, how could it be affected by confusion? Confused yet without confusion, thus, it can still be said to be present. Therefore, the Nature-Essence originally possessed by sentient beings is the Dharma-Body verified by buddhas, the Nature-Measure is the Reward-Body, and the Nature-Inclusion is the Response-Body. The four wisdoms, ten powers, four kinds of fearlessness, eighteen unshared dharmas, etc., should also be understood in this manner.

Hence, an ancient worthy said, "sentient beings residing in the buddhas' minds are in Ultimate Bliss within every atom, the buddhas residing in the sentient beings' minds verify reality within every thought."[46] Therefore, Amitabha is my mind, my mind is Amitabha. Even before raising a single thought [of taking birth in the Pureland], it has been accomplished. In the moment of giving rise to a thought [aspiring to take birth in

[46] Originally a phrase used in the Tiantai school, cited in the *Preface to the Ten Doubts on the Pureland*.

the Pureland], [that birth] is perfectly completed. This principle abides in the path of Stimulus and Response, so those who are mindful of the Buddha do not waste their effect.

5. The Gate of the Dharma Realm as Mindfulness

The perfected interfused essence of the Dharma-Realm,

acts as a single moment of my mind,

So, my heart, mindful of the Buddha,

Is, in its entirety, the Dharma-Realm.

The Treatise states:

When the practitioner recites the Buddha's name, or engages in contemplation of the Buddha, or contemplates the primary and circumstantial retributions, or cultivates the three kinds of pure karma[47], or when they are single-minded without deviation, or reciting the name with a scattered mind, down to when they are mired in the afflictions of view and cultivation numbering up to the number of the Ganges' sands, as long as they possess this mind, all is not but created by suchness according to conditions without change, its essence is precisely the Dharma-Realm.

Hence, master Fazhi said, "The perfectly interfused and inconceivable essence of the Dharma-Realm acts as a single moment of my mind; further, its entire being acts as sentient beings, as buddhas, as primary retributions, and as circumstantial retributions."[48]

If so, even other kinds of minds are like this, how much more so the mind that is mindful of the Buddha! Therefore, when a practitioner is mindful of the Buddha, this mind is the perfectly interfused, pristine, and precious awakening. Using this marvellous mind to be mindful of Amitabha, which of the three bodies could one not be mindful of? When seeking rebirth in the four kinds of buddha-lands, which land could one not take birth in? There is merely a distinction in the depth of practice and ranking of one's position.

Question: If all other kinds of mind are also the Dharma-Realm, what need is there to be mindful of the Buddha?

Answer: Other minds are [the Dharma realm] mind but act inversely [to the Dharma Realm's nature], and mindfulness of the Buddha accords with [the Dharma Realm's nature]. So, through accordance, inversion is transformed. Thus, there is a need to be

---

[47] Three Kinds of Pure Karma, from the *Contemplation of Infinite Life Sutra*:
a) Conventional Karma: worldly goods.
b) Refuge in the three jewels.
c) Mahayana practice, giving rise to bodhicitta, and encouraging others to do likewise.

[48] Citation of Similing Zhili's *sub commentary on the Wondrous Doctrine* to Zhiyi's Commentary on the *Contemplation of Infinite Life Sutra*. His most well-known work.

mindful of the Buddha. It is not the case that the Dharma-Realm is different [for other minds and mindfulness of the Buddha].[49]

[49] This question and answer are not present in the standard edition. The *Aural Commentary* notes that old editions are missing this section and amended the issue. However, the standard Taisho edition of the treatise is still missing it.

6. The Gate of the Mutual Absorption of Object and Contemplations

The various contemplative objects, such as the sixteen [of the Pureland],[50]

The twofold contemplations of phenomena and principle,[51]

Mutually absorb the other,

Just like Indra's Net.

The Treatise states:

The Mutual Absorption of Object and Contemplations has its basis in the mutual non-obstruction between all phenomena.[52] The reason why all phenomena are mutually unobstructed is that they are of a fundamental source. This is because the perfectly interfused and inconceivable essence of the Dharma-Realm acts as my mind of a single thought-moment. It further, in its entirety, acts as sentient beings, acts as buddhas, acts as circumstantial and primary retributions. Since it acts in its entirety, what dharma is not identical to the entire Dharma-Realm? Hence, it is said: "The Dharma-Realm of a single atom is not small, the Dharma-Realm of the ocean is not large. Many are the Dharma-Realm, few are also the Dharma-Realm." So, it is the case that the contemplative objects such as the sixteen meditations of the western direction, the twofold contemplations of phenomena and principle of my mind, are each not but the entirety of the Dharma-Realm.

---

[50] Sixteen Contemplative Objects: From the Contemplation of Infinite Life Sutra, where the Buddha teaches a meditation on the environment of the Pureland.

- 1. Sun 2. Water 3. Earth 4. Trees 5. Lake 6. The previous images together 7. The primary retribution 8. The Lotus Seat 9. The Buddha's body 10. Avalokiteśvara 11. Mahāsthāmaprāpta 12. Aspirants to the Pureland 13. Amitabha and the two bodhisattvas 14. Lower rebirth grades 15. Middling rebirth grades 16. Higher rebirth grades.

[51] Phenomenal practice is of the conventional level, contemplating the objects based on their ordinary characteristics. Principle contemplation engages the ultimate reality and innate nature of the ordinary objects, such as their emptiness, inherence to the mind, etc.

[52] The text's Huayan influence is apparent here. The Aural Commentary cites the Huayan ancestor, Dushun's explanation of the four Dharma Realms

a) Phenomenal Dharma Realm: The various distinct dharmas of matter and mind, that have their fix boundaries, separating one another.
b) Principle Dharma Realm: Though the various dharmas are distinct, they share a single essence.
c) Non-Obstruction of Phenomena and Principle: Principle is revealed by phenomena, phenomena are established based on principle.
d) Mutual Non-Obstruction of Phenomena with Phenomena: All distinct dharmas are interfused through accordance with their innate nature; one and many are identical, small and large meld into one another.

Just like Indra's net in the palace of Śakra, although each jewel [on the net] is distinct, their reflections enter every jewel. Although their reflections manifest in every jewel, their illuminating function differs. Objects and contemplations are just like this. When the object is phenomenal, the contemplation is the principle, and since the principle encompasses phenomena, this is the absorption of the object into contemplation. If contemplation is phenomenal, then the object is principle, and since principle encompasses phenomena, this is the absorption of contemplation into the object. Or one thing is the phenomena and the rest principle, or one is the principle and the remaining phenomena, with each absorbing the other, just like in Indra's net.

If this is so, when I engage in contemplation, the primary and circumstantial retributions of the western direction are already within my contemplation, and my body-mind is already within the primary and circumstantial [retributions of the Pureland]. Those who apprehend this and then seek [birth in the land of] ease can be likened to wild geese soaring through the vast sky, or a shadow sinking into icy water. The geese do not try to hide their tracks, and the water is of no mind in retaining its image.[53]

[53] This is a citation of the Chan Master Tianyi Yihuai 天衣义怀 (989-1060), a Chan master who also engaged in Pureland Dharma. The *Aural Commentary* explains that the goose and icy water represent definite birth in the Pureland, and the lack of tracks and no mind complete the equation, as they mean there is no going to the Pureland, as there is no birth. In the Dharmakaya that encompasses the ten directions, there is no coming and going, yet in the sublime reward body, coming and going is possible for those whose karma is yet to be exhausted. The transformation body and Dharmakaya are identical, so birth and non-birth are without distinction.

7. The Gate of the Three Natural Contemplations

That which can contemplate is the Three Contemplations,

That which is contemplated is the Three Truths,

Cultivation arises from the totality of the [fundamental] nature,

Hence, it is referred to as natural.[54]

The Treatise states:

The Three Truths are the ultimate, the conventional, and the middle. The Three Contemplations are emptiness, provisional [existence], and the middle. To forget delusion and sever conceptualisation, there is nothing superior to the ultimate. To accord with conditions to function, there is nothing superior to the conventional. To connect and interfuse emptiness with existence, there is nothing superior to the middle.

Void, luminous, and unobscured, that is the inherent emptiness of my own mind. Responding to all things that arise, that is my mind's intrinsic existence. The mutual identity of existence and emptiness, that is, the inherent middle of my mind. These refer to the [fundamental] nature; they are [not created through] cultivation. These are the Three Truths, not the Three Contemplations.[55]

Cultivation is illuminating apprehension in accordance with the [fundamental] nature.[56] Therefore, to thoroughly realise the essence of this mind is empty, void of any phenomena, is referred to as emptiness. To illuminatingly apprehend this [fundamental] nature as possessing the myriad dharmas is referred to as provisional [existence]. To interfuse the two extremes, as neither the same nor different, is referred to as the middle.[57] Further, all things are responded to in void luminosity; void luminosity is within the response towards all things.

---

[54] Natural 法尔, the *Aural Commentary* explains this term as meaning the nature of all dharmas (dharmatā) is as it is, not fabricated at all, and totally natural.

[55] The *Aural Commentary* explains that the Three Truths are unchanging suchness, the sublime nature that can create. The Three Delusions are what are created through following contaminated conditions. The Three Contemplations are what are created through following pristine cultivation.

[56] The *Aural Commentary* explains that Tiantai practice is not based on effort or conditioned work, but natural illumination of the fundamental nature.

[57] *Aural Commentary:* The mind is originally void. When it is darkened and disturbed, these are called the afflictions of view and cultivation.
The original nature is inherently complete. When it is entirely deluded and obscured, these are called the affliction of dust and sends.
The essence is fundamentally interpenetrating. When one falsely discriminates between sameness and difference, this is called ignorance (*avidyā*).

Emptiness is provisional [existence] and the middle. Provisional [existence] is emptiness and the middle. The middle is emptiness and provisional [existence]. This is cultivation in accordance with the [fundamental] nature, absolute illumination, the inconceivable Three Contemplations, and the guide to the great Śūraṅgama Samadhi.

Thus far, we have discussed [the Three Contemplations] separately; to speak of them together,[58] then perhaps the void luminosity of my mind is emptiness, the myriad phenomena that are the objects of my contemplation are the provisional, and the non-duality of the mind and its objects is the middle. Since phenomena are the phenomena of my mind, what provisional [existent] is not empty? Since my mind is the mind of the myriad phenomena, what emptiness is not provisionally [existent]? Mind is phenomena, phenomena are mind. Phenomena are mind, mind is phenomena; what middle is not empty and provisional?

Because the contemplation of the Pureland's primary and circumstantial retributions is my mind's singular contemplation of the Three Contemplations, illuminating the singular contemplative object of the Three Truths, there is nothing impossible. Or, taking my Three Contemplations within a single mind to illuminate the Three Truths within a single object, there too nothing is impossible.

Master Huxi said,

"The contemplative object is sublime provisional [existence], and contemplation is emptiness,

To forget both object and contemplation is the middle,

To forget illumination, what sequence of first and last could there be?

The One Mind is interfused and absolute without a single trace."

Which of the Three Contemplations could not be natural?

[58] The base Taisho text has 'horizontal' and 'vertical' instead of 'separate' and 'together', as found in the *Aural Commentary*.

a) Separate means the contemplations and truths are discussed separately, as that which contemplates and that which is contemplated.
b) Together means that the three contemplations are unified as the emptiness of that which contemplates, the three truths unified as the provisional existence of that which is contemplated, and the cessation of the mind with its objects is the middle.

8. The Gate of Spontaneously Functioning of Resonance and Response

My heart resonates with all Buddhas,

Amitabha immediately responds from afar,

By nature, we are intrinsically tied,

Like a magnet drawing a needle.

The Treatise states:

The various buddhas and sentient beings share a single source of awakening, though distinct in confusion and realisation, the fundamental principle is eternally equal. Hence, it is said, "The buddhas are the buddhas within the mind of sentient beings, and sentient beings are the sentient beings within the buddhas' minds." Based upon these words, buddhas and beings are never disconnected in the essence of mind. However, buddhas, never at any time, are devoid of the desire to liberate beings, yet beings, in each and every thought, turn away from them in delusion.

Thus, Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta [in the Śūraṅgama Sutra] said, "One person exclusively remembers, another exclusively forgets, though they may meet, it is as if they had not, though they see each other, it is as though they have not. If a son remembers this mother, just as his mother remembers him, then the mother and son, though through various lives, will not be far apart. If sentient beings remember the Buddha, are mindful of the Buddha, then in the future, they are sure to see the Buddha and not be distanced from him.[59]

It is directly due to the equality of the singular principle that their natures are intrinsically tied, and [the Buddha] can spontaneously remove their suffering and bestow joy. Furthermore, Amitāyus Buddha, while on the causal [ground of practice], made forty-eight vows, swearing to bring about ultimate bliss to gather and sustain sentient beings. Now, he has long since attained the path's fruit and fulfilled his sajnāha (Great Bodhisattva Vows). Therefore, the multitudes of sentient beings shall need not worry that the Buddha does not respond to them. They need merely deep faith, reminiscent mindfulness, and to generate the vow[60] to take birth in the western direction, then, like a magnet and a needle [they shall be drawn together].

---

[59] The *Aural Commentary* explains 'remember' refers to phenomenal apprehension of pure contemplative objects, and 'mindful' means to be in accordance with the principle of the original source.

[60] Here, the *Aural Commentary* explains faults found in a faith, mindfulness, and vows.

a) Lack of Faith:

However, just as a magnet can attract a needle spontaneously, it cannot attract copper, and a needle can align with a magnet, but not with jade. That is to say, the Buddha can liberate those with whom he has a connection but cannot liberate those with whom he does not. Sentient beings can easily resonate with Amitabha but cannot easily resonate with the various other buddhas. How could this not be related to the vows of sentient beings and the buddhas? Thus, those who seek birth in the Pureland cannot lack in faith, vows, and conduct, be it just a single element.

---

   a. Complete lack of faith, e.g. non-Buddhists
   b. Faith in oneself is a Buddha, but no faith in other buddhas, e.g. Chan practitioners
   c. Faith in other buddhas, but not that oneself is a Buddha, e.g. those that only engage in phenomenal practice.

b) Lack of Mindfulness
   a. Complete lack of mindfulness, e.g. common worldling.
   b. Mindfuless of oneself, but not others, e.g. Chan practitioners
   c. Mindfuless of others, but not oneself, e.g. those that only engage in phenomenal practice.

c) Lack of vows
   a. Those without any vows, e.g. worldlings.
   b. Vows to attain Buddhahood for oneself, but lacking aspiration for others buddhas to attain awakening, e.g. Chan practitioners.
   c. Vows for other buddhas to come receive oneself, but unaware that the Buddha in oneself is who is received, e.g. those that only engage in phenomenal practice.

9. The Gate of the Eternal Oneness Between "This" and "That"

If one whose time has come,

Can maintain right mindfulness without fail,

And comes to see light or see flowers,

Rebirth in the jewelled pond has already been received.

The Treatise states:

The "Biographies of those Reborn [in the Pureland]" states, "Zhang Kang, official of the Later Jin dynasty, who was a Hanlin Scholar, recited the Great Compassion Dharani as his daily practice, and vowed to be born in the Western Direction. One Day, while confined to bed with illness, he engaged solely in reciting the Buddha's name. Suddenly, he said to his family, "The Western Pureland is just west of this house's hall! Amitabha Buddha is sitting atop a lotus watching Little Weng play in the gold sands of the lotus pond." After some time, whilst reciting the Buddha's name, he passed away. Little Weng was Kang's grandson.

The reason behind this is that the Blissful World of the West is a world of my mind, and the Saha World is too, a world of my mind. Speaking in terms of worlds, a hundred trillion buddha-lands set them apart. Contemplating in terms of the mind, they are fundamentally neither far apart nor close by. However, sentient beings, since taking birth, have been separated from their true nature. Due to being confined to the five aggregates, they are unable to accord with the mind's source.

When the resultant retribution of someone mindful of the Buddha is ripe, and they are soon to abandon the present aggregates to take on the aggregates of a future birth, the Pureland lotus appears before them. This is merely an object of mind; there are neither the appearances of coming and going, nor here and there.

Hence, the Śūraṅgama Sutra states, *"At life's end, having yet to abandon warmth and contact, all the good and evils of one lifetime suddenly manifest. Pure thought immediately ascends, for sure to take birth in the heavens.*[61] *If the ascending mind is replete in both merit and wisdom,*[62] *as well as pure vows, then naturally the mind opens, seeing the buddhas of the ten directions, and one is free to take rebirth in all Purelands."*

---

[61] The *Aural Commentary* explains that this refers to the moment just before death, as life according to Buddhism consists of warmth, breath, and contact. "merit

[62] *Aural Commentary:* merit refers to supportive practice, and wisdom is the mind of the Buddha.

When Master Fazhi said, *"It must be known, at the end of life, should one see themselves sitting atop a golden lotus, already their body is the aggregates of that [Pure] land," his* meaning was precisely this.[63]

[63] Quote from Zhili's *Sublime Doctrine Sub Commentary.*

10. The Gate of the Mutual Presence of Present and Future

Now the practitioner reciting the Buddha's name,

Their merit was not given in vain,

For within the cause, is already the result,

Like a lotus coming to blossom.

The Treatise states:

Practitioners belonging to the Perfect and Sudden teaching immediately realise the mind's nature, practice without practice, and cultivate [for the sake of rebirth] in the Land of Joy.[64] The Ultimate Bliss [Land] possessed in one's nature is made apparent through cultivation. This nature of mind vertically penetrates the three times and horizontally encompasses the ten directions. Buddha-dharmas, sentient-being dharmas, primary dharmas, circumstantial dharmas, causal dharmas, and resultant dharmas are all perfectly accomplished within a single thought.

So it is, those who are mindful of the Buddha are said to give rise to cultivation from the entirety of the [fundamental] nature, and that the entirety of their cultivation is found in the [fundamental] nature. Though giving rise to cultivation from the entirety of the [fundamental] nature is known as the cause, the entirety of their cultivation being found in the [fundamental] nature is the cause possessing its result within. Since both the inherently possessed causal dharmas and inherently possessed resultant dharmas abide together in the single [fundamental] nature, this nature of mind is interfused and interconnecting; there is no dharma it does not possess, just as when a lotus bud opens, its fruit is already found in its petals.[65]

---

[64] The *Aural Commentary: "The method of mindfulness of the Buddha is the same, yet in doctrine there is the partial and complete, and in practice gradual and sudden…practitioners of the perfect and sudden, initially suddenly realise the nature of mind, that the worldling's mind is the Buddha mind. The causal source transcends the resultant ocean. They realise mind-inclusion so nothing is not replete, they realise the nature measure so no world is not complete, and they realise the nature-essence so there is neither arising nor ceasing.*
Having awakened, there is a need for further cultivation. Though they cultivate, they realise there is no cultivation. Through non-cultivation, they continue to cultivate. They cultivate the practice of the Blissful Country. Though that [Blissful Country] is replete in their nature, due to their essence being in delusion, without perfect cultivation, that Ultimate Bliss within them cannot manifest."

[65] *Aural Commentary* explains this is focusing on Nature-Inclusion. The unchanging essence of suchness accords with pure and contaminated conditions. Although it possesses a changing function, its unchanging essence is always one. Those of the perfect teaching understand this, knowing that the cause dharma (the nine lower realms) and the resultant dharma (the buddha realm), abide in a single instance of mind.

Moreover, this mind is eternally abiding, free from arising and ceasing, coming and going! This very instant of mind that is mindful of the Buddha, is the moment of receiving birth in the Jewelled Lake that is to come.[66] Therefore, it is said that those who have just made the aspiration [for birth in the Pureland] have already sprouted a lotus seed within its Jewelled Pond. If they can practice eagerly without retrogression, day by day shall it grow. The lotus flower will gradually bloom, its radiance corresponding to the practitioner's merit. Should one be muddled in laxity, retrogression, and regret, it will wither with each passing day. Yet if one can renew oneself, the lotus flower will regain its lustre. If not, then it should be a scorched sprout and failed seed.

Now, this lotus flower, who is it that plants its seed? The present and future mutually abide. Finally, these words have found their proper conclusion.[67]

Treatise On Birth and Non-Birth in the Pureland

Copyright All work is published on a CC BY-NC-SA license unless otherwise stated.
© 2025 - All rights reserved.

[66] *Aural Commentary:* this now explains Nature-Essence – the mind that is mindful of the buddhas is eternal without coming and going. This very mind that is mindful of the buddhas is the result to be received upon rebirth in the Pureland.

[67] *Aural Commentary, "The lotus flowers of the Saha World are planted by the hand, from form does it gain its form. Form and body are relative matters, and so are closely related. Yet in this closeness they drift distantly apart. The lotus of the Pureland I planted by the mind, from mind does it gain mind. The nature of mind is without dependencies, so the it is distant. Yet in its distance, it is instead close by. Since the mind possess the result in its cause, and since its nature horizontally pervades and vertically exhausts, it extinguishes any appearance of coming or going and severs relative form. Now there can be no more doubt about the mutual abiding of present and future."*